

<b>Episode Characteristics (Surfing and E-Mail/Instant Message)</b>	<b>All (n=538)</b>	<b>Distressing (n=139)</b>
<b>How Situation Ended*</b>		
Removed Self From Situation (Blocking or Leaving Site or Computer)	92%	87%
Told Sender to Stop/Confronted or Warned Sender	<1%	1%
Changed Screen Name, Profile, or E-Mail Address	1%	1%
Stopped Without Youth Doing Anything	1%	1%
Called Law Enforcement or Other Authorities, ISP	<1%	0
Parent/Guardian or Teacher Handled Situation	3%	5%
Apologized, Made-Up, Smoothed Over	<1%	0
Installed Software	1%	2%
Ignored It	1%	0
Still Happening	<1%	0
Other	6%	9%
<b>Installed Filtering, Blocking, or Monitoring Software After This Happened</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>37%</b>
<b>Incident Known or Disclosed to*</b>		
Friend or Sibling	18%	17%
Parent/Guardian	27%	42%
Other Adult	1%	1%
Teacher, Counselor, or Other School Personnel	3%	3%
Law Enforcement or Other Authority, ISP	2%	2%
Someone Else	1%	1%
No One	52%	39%
<b>Of Youth Who Did Not Tell Anyone, Why Didn't Youth Tell</b>	<b>52% (n=282)</b>	<b>39% (n=54)</b>
Not Serious Enough	75%	50%
Afraid	12%	31%
Thought Might Get in Trouble	9%	17%
Other	1%	0
<b>Distress: Very/Extremely</b>		
Upset	26%	100%+
Embarrassed	26%	64%
<b>Youth With No/Low Levels of Being Upset</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Stress Symptoms (More Than a Little/All the Time)~</b>		
At Least One of the Following*	19%	42%
Staying Away From Internet or Particular Part of It	12%	27%
Being Unable to Stop Thinking About It	8%	21%
Feeling Jumpy or Irritable	6%	17%
Losing Interest in Things	3%	7%

\* Multiple responses possible.

+ Degree of upset was used to define this category of youth.

~ These items are based on standard research measures of stress responses and represent avoidance behaviors, intrusive thoughts, and physical symptoms.

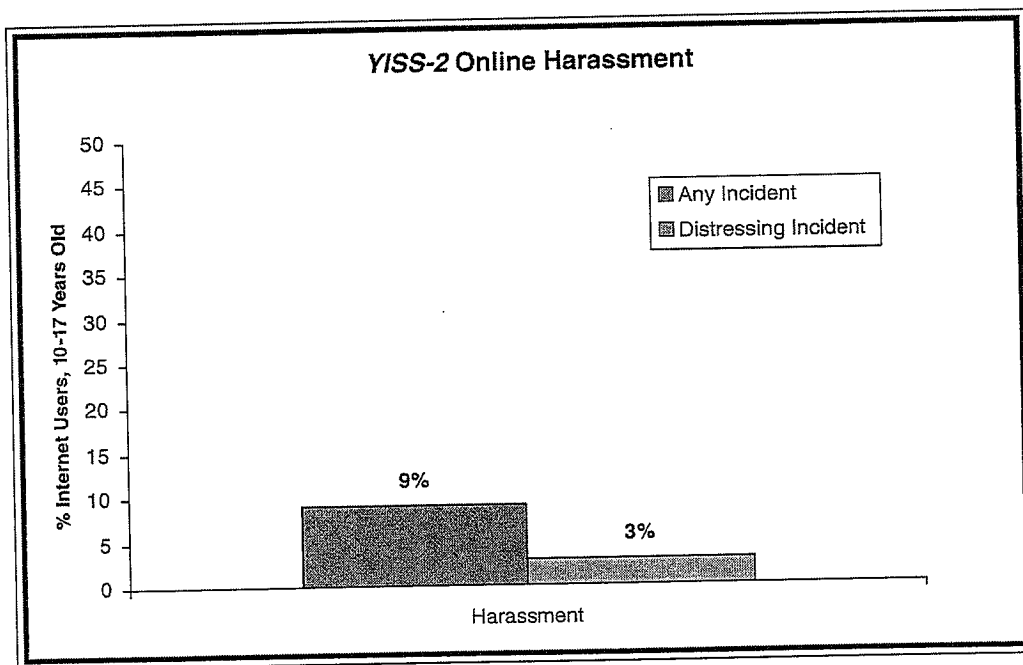
Note: Some categories do not add to 100% because of rounding and/or missing data.



## Online Harassment

Online harassment has received increased attention since the first *Youth Internet Safety Survey* was published. Stories about people using the Internet to spread rumors about individuals or threaten or frighten them in various ways have been widely reported in the media. In both *YISS-1* and *YISS-2* we asked youth whether two kinds of situations happened in the past year. The first was feeling "worried or threatened because someone was bothering or harassing you online." The second was someone "using the Internet to threaten or embarrass you by posting or sending messages about you for other people to see." In *YISS-2*, 9% of youth Internet users said they were **harassed online** in the past year. Six (6) percent said someone was bothering or harassing them online and 3% said someone had posted or sent messages about them for other people to see. Also 3% of youth described an incident of **distressing online harassment**, which left them feeling very or extremely upset or afraid.

Figure 7



## Findings About Online Harassment

Who were the youth targeted for harassment in *YISS-2*?<sup>27</sup>

- The targets were 58% girls and 42% boys
- Girls were more likely than boys to experience distressing harassment (68% compared to 32%)
- The majority of harassment episodes (72%) happened to teenagers ages 14 to 17

<sup>27</sup> Also see Table 3 on page 13, which shows trends in harassment based on youth age and gender for *YISS-1* and *YISS-2*.

**Who were the perpetrators of harassment in YISS-2?**

- Youth said half of the harassers (50%) were male and 28% were female. In 21% of instances youth did not know the gender of the harasser.
- Forty-four (44) percent of harassers were offline friends or acquaintances of youth.
- Fifty-eight (58) percent of harassment perpetrators were other youth. Only 2% were older than 25; however, age was unknown in 19% of incidents, and only 18% of youth who met their harassers online were very or extremely certain of the harasser's age.

**What happened?**

- Most harassment incidents (85%) happened when youth were logged on at home.
- The harassment primarily first happened when youth were communicating in instant messages (47%), E-mails (13%), and chatrooms (11%). It started in online journals or blogs in 3% of cases.
- Close to one-third of youth (31%) were "with friends or other kids [they] knew when this happened."<sup>28</sup>
- One-third of the harassment episodes (33%) included contact or attempts at contact by telephone, offline mail, or in person. When we excluded cases where youth knew their harassers in person, this proportion remained similar (31%).

**What Youth Said About Harassment**

**Boy, 10:** "This person, she gave me her address and told me to come over. I said no, and then she started typing in bad words. [It happened because] there are a lot of people out there that do a lot of stuff. . . . I think they were trying to make me come over there to kidnap me."

**Boy, 12:** "I was at my cousin's house on his computer, and we were playing games. A pop-up came up, and it said, 'I know where you live,' and it showed a map of the area we lived in. It scared me."

**Girl, 12:** "These people from school were calling me a prostitute and whore. . . and saying I was raped. [It happened] because I'm an easy target. I didn't let it bother me until about a month ago and [then] I started getting physical with people."

**Boy, 14:** "I have my own . . . web site, and I have my own page on it, and someone posted something bad about me on it."

**Boy, 15:** "My cousin had my password and went into . . . a blog . . . and pretended to be me and wrote that I [laugh] liked to smell people. He put it in my . . . profile too. [It happened] because I did it to him."

**Girl, 16:** "Someone that I go to school with started spreading rumors about me by posting things in chatrooms and sending E-mails that were talking about me doing sexual things with all these different guys that were not true at all. I didn't even know the guys. [It happened] because at one point I got mad, and we had a confrontation. [She was] doing these things to get back at me — for revenge."

<sup>28</sup> We did not ask about this in YISS-1.



The details provided by some youth revealed certain harassment episodes had sexual aspects, although we do not have an exact percentage. In some cases the harassers were ex-boyfriends or girlfriends or rivals of the youth who were the targets. In some cases the harassment took the form of spreading sexual rumors as the descriptions in the box on the prior page show. Also some of the episodes included sexual solicitations, but they were classified as harassment because the episodes were threatening and youth described them as harassment. In a small percentage of these cases harassers sent sexually explicit photographs to youth (1%) or asked youth for sexually explicit photographs of themselves (8%).

#### **How did youth respond to harassment in YISS-2?**

Many youth (49%) dealt with harassment incidents by removing themselves from the situation such as blocking the person or leaving the site or computer. Some youth simply ignored harassers (8%), while others told the harasser to stop, confronted, or warned the harasser (17%); however, parents/guardians or teachers handled 5% of harassment incidents, and law enforcement or other authorities were called in 5% of incidents.

Youth told someone about two-thirds (67%) of the harassment incidents. This was in contrast to the solicitation and exposure episodes, more than half of which were undisclosed. Many youth (45%) told friends or siblings about harassment, but they told parents or guardians about 31% of all incidents and 42% of distressing incidents.

One-third of harassment incidents (33%) were undisclosed. Of the youth who did not disclose, 63% viewed the incidents as not serious enough, but 19% said they did not tell anyone because they were afraid and 14% because they thought they might get in trouble.

#### **How did harassment incidents affect youth in YISS-2?**

More than half of the incidents (62%) were not at all or only a little upsetting to youth. Youth rated 30% of harassment incidents as very or extremely upsetting and 24% as very or extremely frightening. Twenty-two (22) percent were very or extremely embarrassing.

Slightly more than one-third of youth (34%) had one or more symptoms of stress including staying away from the Internet or a particular part of it, being unable to stop thinking about the incident, feeling jumpy or irritable, and/or losing interest in things. In distressing incidents, close to two-thirds of youth (64%) said they had at least one symptom of stress.

### **Summary**

Harassment still does not occur as frequently as sexual solicitation or unwanted exposure to sexual material, but it was encountered by an increased number of youth. Further, in many instances, it may have had a harsher effect on the youth who endured it, especially when it occurred among friends and schoolmates. More than one-third of harassed youth (38%) found the incident distressing and a larger proportion were driven to disclose what happened than youth with unwanted sexual solicitations or exposures to sexual material. The Internet allows bullies to spread rumors to a large audience. Thus some youth may be using the

Internet to extend the everyday bullying that is widespread among youth into online venues (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004b; Nansel, et al., 2001). Nasty comments and sexual innuendos are no longer confined to a bathroom wall or small groups of peers. Now bullies have an "electronic bathroom wall" that allows for widespread distribution of gossip. The results of the study suggest developing school-based, anti-bullying programs and strong policies against online harassment among students could help reduce this behavior. Involving School Resource Officers and other law-enforcement agents who work with youth in education and prevention campaigns could support effective prevention and intervention.

Table 7. YISS-2 Online Harassment of Youth (N=1,500)

Individual Characteristics	All Incidents (n=130) 9% of Youth	Distressing Incidents (n=50) 3% of Youth
<b>Age of Youth</b>		
10	2%	6%
11	5%	8%
12	5%	6%
13	17%	16%
14	14%	10%
15	20%	16%
16	19%	20%
17	19%	18%
<b>Gender of Youth</b>		
Girl	58%	68%
Boy	42%	32%
Episode Characteristics	All (n=131)	Distressing (n=50)
<b>Gender of Harasser</b>		
Male	50%	56%
Female	28%	24%
Don't Know	21%	20%
<b>Age of Harasser</b>		
Younger Than 18 Years	58%	54%
18 to 25 Years	21%	28%
Older Than 25 Years	2%	6%
Don't Know	19%	12%
<b>Youth Was Very or Extremely Certain of Solicitor's Age*</b>	18% (n=72)	21% (n=29)
<b>Relation to Harasser</b>		
Met Online	55%	58%
Knew in Person Before Incident	44%	40%
<b>Location of Computer When Incident Occurred</b>		
Home	85%	86%
A Friend's Home	3%	0
School	3%	4%
Some Other Place	6%	8%
<b>Place on Internet Incident First Happened</b>		
Chatroom	11%	14%
Using Instant Messages	47%	36%
Game Room or Other Game Site	7%	8%
Online Dating or Romance Site	0	0
E-Mail	13%	20%
Online Forum	4%	0
Online Journal or Blog	3%	6%
Other	13%	10%
Don't Know	2%	6%
<b>Youth Was With Friends or Other Kids When This Happened</b>	31%	26%
<b>Forms of Offline Contact+</b>		
Asked to Meet Somewhere	19%	26%
Sent Offline Mail	2%	0
Called on Telephone	23%	34%
Went to Home	10%	14%
Gave Money, Gifts, or Other Things	11%	16%
Bought Plane, Train, or Bus Ticket	0	0
None of the Above	67%	60%

Episode Characteristics	All Episodes (n=131)	Distressing Episodes (n=50)
<b>Harasser Sent Picture of Self</b>	10%	14%
Picture Was Sexual	1%	4%
<b>Harasser Requested Picture of Youth</b>	23%	38%
Wanted a Sexual Picture	8%	16%
Youth Sent a Sexual Picture	0	0
<b>Youth Met Harasser in Person<sup>^</sup></b>	2%	2%
<b>How Situation Ended<sup>+</sup></b>		
Removed Self From Situation (Blocking or Leaving Site or Computer)	49%	54%
Told Harasser to Stop/Confronted or Warned Harasser	17%	18%
Changed Screen Name, Profile, or E-Mail Address	4%	4%
Parent/Guardian or Teacher Handled Situation	5%	6%
Apologized, Made-Up, Smoothed Over	9%	8%
Ignored Harasser or It, Stopped Talking to Harasser	8%	6%
Still Happening	1%	0
Stopped Without Youth Doing Anything	5%	6%
Called Law Enforcement or Other Authorities	5%	4%
Other	8%	10%
Don't Know	3%	6%
<b>Installed Filtering, Blocking, or Monitoring Software After This Happened</b>	29%	40%
<b>Incident Known or Disclosed to<sup>+</sup></b>		
Friend or Sibling	45%	42%
Parent/Guardian	31%	42%
Other Adult	1%	0
Teacher, Counselor, or Other School Personnel	2%	2%
Law Enforcement or Other Authority, ISP	9%	10%
Someone Else	7%	4%
No One	33%	30%
<b>Of Youth Who Did Not Tell Anyone, Why Didn't Youth Tell</b>	<b>33% (n=43)</b>	<b>30% (n=15)</b>
Not Serious Enough	63%	40%
Afraid	19%	33%
Thought Might Get in Trouble	14%	13%
Other	0	0
<b>Distress: Very/Extremely<sup>+</sup></b>		
Upset	30%	78%
Afraid	24%	64%
Embarrassed	22%	42%
<b>Youth With No/Low Levels of Being Upset or Afraid</b>	62%	-
<b>Stress Symptoms (More Than a Little/All the Time)<sup>-</sup></b>		
At Least One of the Following <sup>+</sup>	34%	64%
Staying Away From Internet or Particular Part of It	15%	28%
Being Unable to Stop Thinking About It	17%	40%
Feeling Jumpy or Irritable	17%	38%
Losing Interest in Things	8%	16%

\* Only youth who did not know the harasser prior to the incident were asked this question.

+ Multiple responses possible.

- These items are based on standard research measures of stress responses and represent avoidance behaviors, intrusive thoughts, and physical symptoms.

<sup>^</sup> None of these youth were sexually assaulted.

Note: Some categories do not add to 100% because of rounding and/or missing data.



## Education, Prevention, and Risky Online Behavior

### Concerns of Parents and Guardians

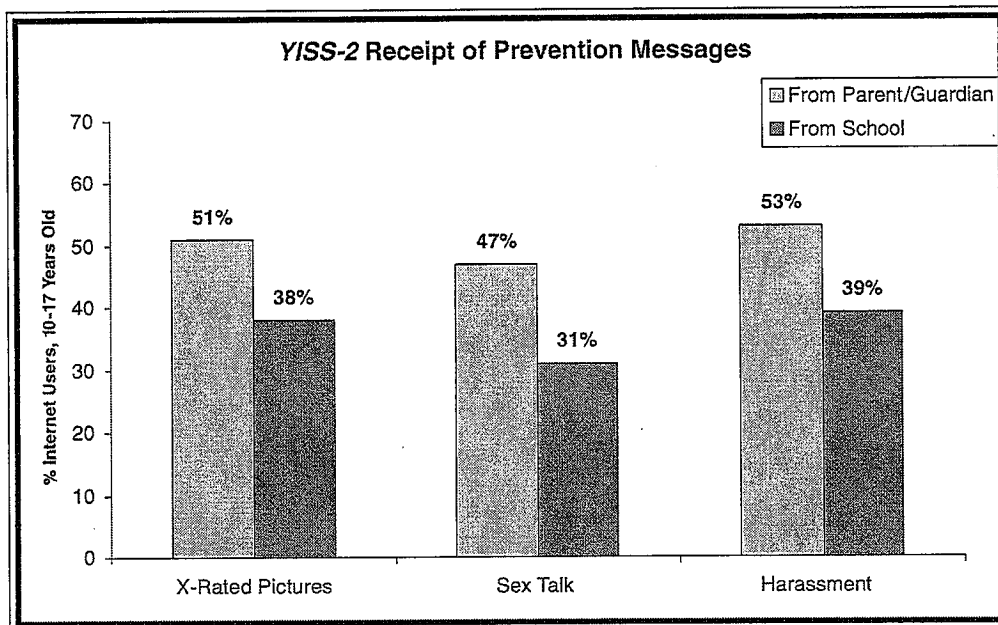
#### How concerned are parents and guardians about online safety?

Concerns of parents and guardians about Internet safety have not lessened since YISS-1. In both YISS-1 and YISS-2, more than 90% of parents and guardians were very or extremely concerned about their children being exposed to sexually explicit content on the Internet. In addition most parents and guardians believed their children were responsible Internet users. Only about 5% of parents and guardians had a low degree of trust in their children to use the Internet in a responsible way. Eighty-eight (88) percent of parents and guardians interviewed in YISS-2 said they had talked to their children about giving out personal information online. The great majority of parents and guardians had also spoken with their children about the dangers of chatting online with people they do not know in person (86%); responding to offensive, nasty, or mean messages (77%); talking online about very personal things such as sex (76%); and dealing with X-rated, pop-up ads or spam E-mail (76%).

#### What kinds of prevention messages are youth receiving?

Compared to the responses of parents and guardians, a smaller proportion of youth, but still a considerable proportion, acknowledged hearing these types of prevention messages from their parents or guardians. About half of youth said their parents or guardians had spoken with them in the past year about seeing X-rated pictures on the Internet (51%); people on the Internet who want to talk to them about sex (47%); and people on the Internet who might threaten, harass, or bother them (53%). Also between 31% and 39% of youth interviewed in YISS-2 said someone at school had talked to them about these matters, depending on the topic. We do not know, however, what kind of details were included in these talks. For example some parents/guardians or schools may have offered technical information about how to use software for filtering pornographic web sites or discussed how to report possibly illegal sexual solicitations, while others may have just conveyed rules about not visiting X-rated sites or chatrooms on school computers.

Figure 8



Twenty-one (21) percent of youth surveyed in YISS-2 had attended a presentation about Internet safety hosted by law enforcement. Younger youth had more exposure to law-enforcement Internet safety presentations. Of the 1,500 youth surveyed, 23% of those ages 10 to 12 and 29% of those ages 13 and 14 had attended law-enforcement presentations compared to 17% of youth 15 and older.

#### **Were families surveyed in YISS-2 using filtering, blocking, and monitoring software?**

Since more than one-third of youth Internet users surveyed in YISS-2 revealed unwanted exposure to sexual material (34%), we were somewhat surprised to find there was a substantial increase in the number of parents and guardians who said there was software on their children's computers to filter or block X-rated sites or monitor their children's behavior online. Fifty-five (55) percent of parents and guardians with home Internet access surveyed in YISS-2 had such software currently installed on the computer their child used, compared to 33% in YISS-1.

In YISS-2 we asked parents and guardians with home Internet access what kinds of software they used on their children's computers.<sup>29</sup> More than half (53%) used software that blocked pop-ups/spam or filtered sexually explicit material, and most had some combination of such software.

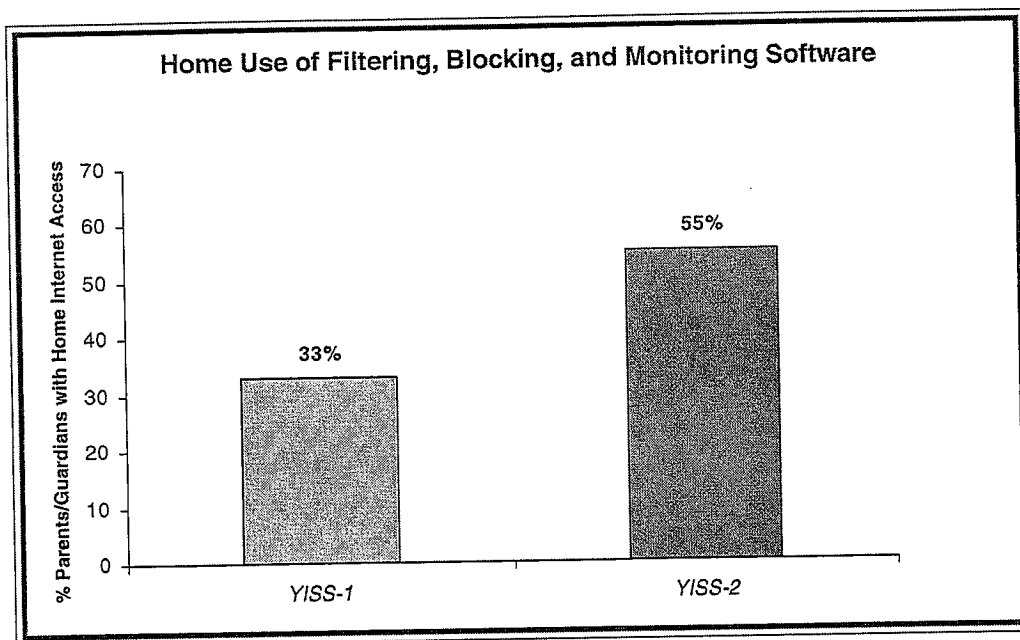
- 47% had software to block pop-up ads
- 47% had software to block spam
- 47% had software to filter sexually explicit images or web sites

<sup>29</sup> We did not ask about this in YISS-1.

Almost half of parents and guardians (48%) used software that monitored or controlled how their child used the Internet in other ways. The software parents and guardians used

- Monitored youths' online activities (35%)
- Blocked or controlled use of chatrooms (31%)
- Blocked personal information from being posted or E-mailed (30%)
- Included a browser or search engine just for kids (22%)
- Limited the amount of time youth could spend online (11%)

Figure 9



We also asked youth who had home Internet access (91% of YISS-2 youth) whether there was any software on the computer they used most that blocked pop-up ads or spam E-mail or filtered, blocked, or monitored how they used the Internet in other ways. More youth than parents and guardians said they used filtering, blocking, or monitoring software — 81% versus 50% of parents and guardians. Most of the difference was attributable to youth saying they used pop-up and spam blockers their parents or guardians may not have known about. Youth can easily download such blockers, which may offer some protection from exposure to sexual material but are mainly designed to prevent annoying advertisements in general, rather than to block sexual material.

We asked parents and guardians who said they used filtering, blocking, or monitoring software why they installed it.<sup>30</sup> Five (5) percent mentioned specific incidents that prompted their actions, such as something disturbing happening to a child or a child doing something inappropriate online. About half (51%) mentioned a general desire to protect their child from possible online harms. Thirteen (13) percent mentioned concerns about blocking pop-ups, spam,

<sup>30</sup> We did not ask about this in YISS-1.

pornography, and viruses without mentioning their children. Fifteen (15) percent simply said they installed software that came with their computer or was supplied by their Internet service provider.

There are several possible explanations for the increase in the use of filtering, blocking, and monitoring software since YISS-1 was released. Prevention programs and publicity may have made both parents/guardians and youth more aware of problems related to Internet use and more likely to take action to avoid those risks. If youth are more conscious of the risks of Internet use, more of them may agree with their parents or guardians that such software is helpful, reducing family conflict around the issue. Current versions of software may work better than previous versions. Some types of filtering, blocking, or monitoring programs come with computers or are provided free through Internet service providers, making it easy for people to install them. Also new problems that have erupted since YISS-1 was published, such as pop-up ads, may prompt the use of blocking software for more than one reason. Not only are pop-up ads sources of sexual material, they may also interfere with how computers operate. Also spyware, adware, and other stealth programs not only force sexual material on Internet users, they interfere with computer performance and make programs and computers crash. Youth and parents/guardians may be frustrated by these problems with computer performance, as well as with unwelcome intrusions of sexual material.

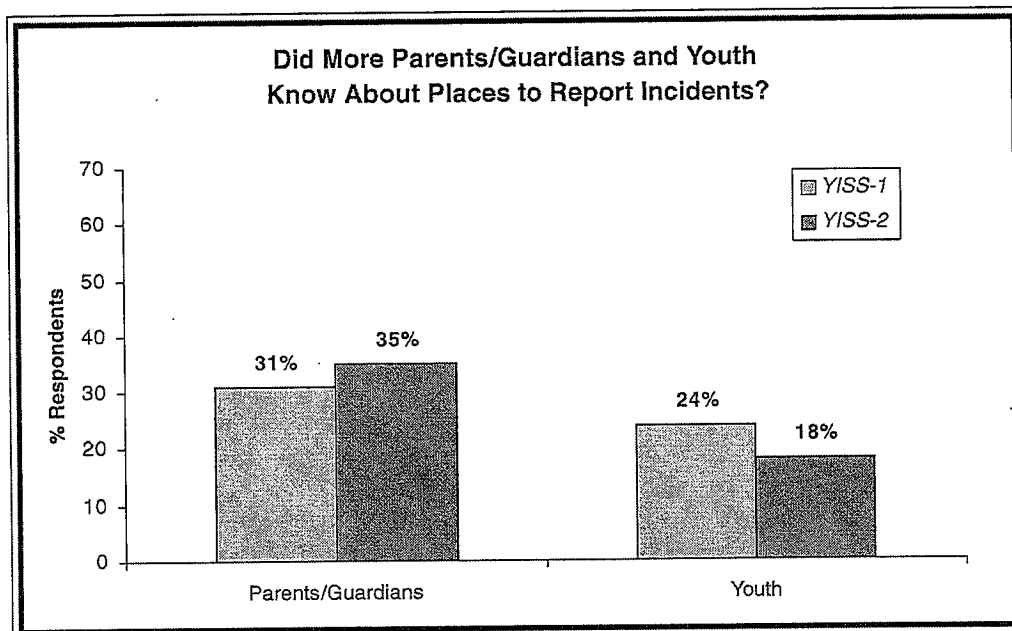
#### **Do parents/guardians and youth know where to report unwanted Internet experiences?**

We asked parents and guardians if they had heard of places where they could report cases of children being exposed to sexual material or illegal or offensive sexual solicitations. More parents and guardians had heard of such places in YISS-2, 35% compared to 31% as reported in YISS-1. Most of these parents and guardians (68%), however, could not name a specific reporting place. The proportion of youth who said they knew of places to report declined, going from 24% in YISS-1 to 18% in YISS-2. Half of youth who said they knew of places (50%) could not come up with a specific place to report unwanted Internet incidents.

More youth who had attended presentations about Internet safety given by law enforcement, however, knew about places to report incidents (23% versus 17%) and more were aware of the CyberTipline (8% versus 5%) than youth who had not attended law-enforcement presentations. Youth who said their parents/guardians or schools had talked to them about solicitations, exposure to sexual material, or harassment on the Internet were also more likely to say they had heard of places to report (20% of youth whose parents or guardians had talked to them versus 12% whose parents or guardians had not and 23% of those who said someone at school had talked to them versus 13% who said someone at school had not).



Figure 10



Also the CyberTipline is still not well known among parents/guardians or youth, although knowledge increased among youth. Knowledge of the CyberTipline by parents/guardians remained about the same — 9% in YISS-2 compared to 10% in YISS-1. Youth knowledge was low in both surveys, but it had more than doubled since YISS-1. When we asked youth, “Have you ever heard of the CyberTipline?” 5% said yes in YISS-2 compared to only 2% in YISS-1.

In general people may not be aware of resources until something happens prompting them to look for help. In YISS-2, however, we found few youth told parents or guardians about unwanted sexual solicitations (12%), about one-quarter told parents or guardians about exposures to sexual material (27%), and slightly less than one-third told about a harassment incident (31%). Only 7% of solicitations were disclosed to authorities such as law enforcement, Internet service providers, teachers, or other school personnel; only 5% of unwanted exposures were disclosed to that group; and 11% of harassment incidents. So even when problems occurred parents/guardians and youth often did not look to law enforcement, Internet service providers, or schools for help. Most youth who did not disclose incidents (69% of those with undisclosed solicitations, 75% with undisclosed exposures, and 63% with undisclosed harassment) said it was because the incident was not serious enough. Even when youth did tell someone, often no one took the next step of contacting an outside resource for help.

### **Risky Online Behavior**

In YISS-1 and YISS-2 we asked youth whether they engaged in several kinds of risky behaviors that could possibly increase the chances they would experience unwanted sexual solicitations, exposure to sexual material, or harassment. We asked about three types of behaviors, although because of time constraints we



were not able to gather detailed information about the contexts of these behaviors. The behaviors were

- Posting personal information or pictures online or sending personal information or pictures to someone the youth knew only online
- Engaging in online sexual behaviors such as going to X-rated web sites on purpose, using a screen name with sexual connotations, sending sexual pictures online, or talking to people youth knew only online about sex
- Saying rude or nasty things online or using the Internet to harass or embarrass others

### **Posting or Sending Personal Information or Pictures**

Most Internet safety information directs youth not to post, send, or otherwise share personal information via the Internet with people they do not know in person. At the same time it is not always clear in this information how risky it is to reveal personal information online. Further, it is not clear what kinds of information are particularly problematic, or exactly what the risks are with respect to the different situations in which youth disclose personal information online. For example youth may disclose different types of information in a variety of venues such as in online journals, blogs, and profiles; web sites requiring registration; or online shopping venues.

In YISS-2 there was a large increase in the proportion of youth who posted personal information and pictures online. Thirty-four (34) percent had posted their real names, telephone numbers, home addresses, or the names of their schools online where anyone could see; 45% had posted their dates of birth or ages; and 18% had posted pictures of themselves. In contrast, in YISS-1 only 11% of youth had posted any such personal information and only 5% had posted pictures. Unfortunately we did not have time during the interviews to gather details about the contexts of these postings. These increases may be at least partly related to the popularity of blogs, online journals, and profiles allowing youth to create elaborate web sites about their lives. These types of web sites were not a part of youth culture when YISS-1 was conducted. Postings, however, could have been at other places such as web sites run by schools and youth organizations that post information about and pictures of youth events. We do not have enough information to evaluate the risk that postings at different types of web sites pose in terms of unwanted sexual solicitations or harassment.

Compared to those who posted information online, a smaller proportion of youth in YISS-2 had sent personal information to people they had met online. Eleven (11) percent of all youth said they had sent their real names, telephone numbers, home addresses, or the names of their schools to someone they met online. Twenty-three (23) percent had given their ages or date of birth to someone they met online. Again, we did not have time to gather details about the contexts in which youth sent this information. It is common for chatroom participants to ask each other "a/s/l?" meaning "age/sex/location?" by way of introduction, so this could be one reason youth admit to giving their ages more than other information. Also they may feel age is a less sensitive piece of information than the other identifiers we asked about.

The questions about sending personal information to people met online were not asked in YISS-1; however, we did ask about sending pictures to people youth met online in both YISS-1 and YISS-2. While the proportion of youth who posted

pictures online increased, the proportion who sent pictures to people they met online and had never met in person remained about the same. In YISS-2, 9% of youth had sent a picture online while 7% of youth in YISS-1 had done so.

### **Sexual Behavior**

In both YISS-1 and YISS-2 only a small proportion of youth said they went to X-rated Internet sites on purpose or talked online about sex with people they did not know in person. In YISS-2 we asked some additional questions about what youth were doing in these situations.

In YISS-2, 13% of youth said they had gone to an X-rated site on purpose in the past year, compared to 8% in YISS-1. In both surveys we found smaller proportions of youth going to these sites on purpose than were exposed to sexual material involuntarily. It is possible youth are so inundated by sexual material that much of any curiosity they have is satisfied through unwanted exposures. Boys and older youth were more likely to have viewed sexual material on purpose than girls or younger youth. Also many youth (44%) did this when they were "with friends or other kids."<sup>31</sup>

We asked youth how they found out about the sites they visited.<sup>32</sup> More than half of the youth (52%) said they found out about sites through a peer. Other youth found sites through online sources, for example, online searches that were not about sex (33%), pop-up ads in web sites (27%), or spam E-mail (14%). One (1) percent of youth said someone they met online told them about a site. Two youth said the person online who told them about an X-rated web site was an adult.

In YISS-2, 5% of youth told us they had talked about sex online with someone they had never met in person. This is similar to the 4% of youth who had done that in YISS-1. Of the youth who did this, 45% were boys and 55% were girls. The great majority of YISS-2 youth (88%) who had talked online about sex were high school age — 14 and older. Forty-three (43) percent of the youth who had talked online about sex had done so when they were "with friends or other kids."<sup>33</sup>

We also asked about a few behaviors very small numbers of youth admitted to participating in.<sup>34</sup> Two (2) percent of youth said they had used a file-sharing program to download sexual pictures on purpose, and 1% said they used a screen name they considered "sexual in any way." Only 0.1% of youth said they had posted or sent a sexual picture of themselves online.<sup>35</sup>

### **Rudeness and Harassment**

In YISS-2 we found large increases in the numbers of youth who admitted to behaving rudely online and harassing others.

More than one-quarter of all youth (28%) said they had made "rude or nasty comments to someone on the Internet," compared to 14% in YISS-1. In YISS-2 boys and girls did this in about equal numbers (49% versus 51%). Most were 14

<sup>31</sup> We did not ask about this in YISS-1.

<sup>32</sup> We did not ask about this in YISS-1.

<sup>33</sup> We did not ask about this in YISS-1.

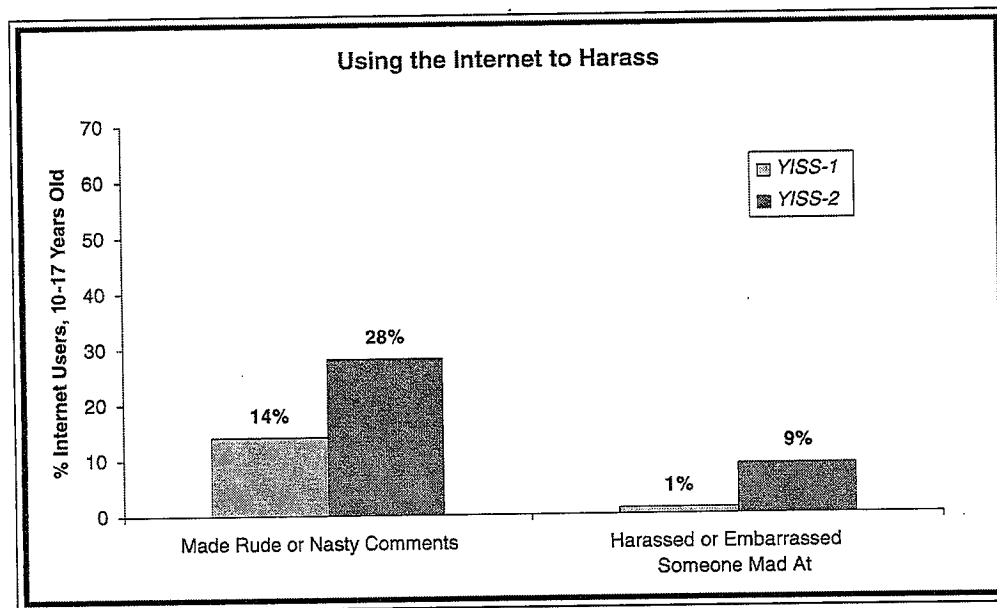
<sup>34</sup> We did not ask about this in YISS-1.

<sup>35</sup> We did not ask about this in YISS-1.

and older (80%). Youth who did this were often with other youth (44%) and most youth (71%) said they had done this to people they knew in person.

The number of youth engaging in online harassment of others also increased substantially. In YISS-2, 9% of youth said they used the Internet to harass or embarrass someone they were mad at, compared to only 1% of youth in YISS-1. The youth who harassed or embarrassed others were similar in terms of gender and age to those who admitted to being rude and nasty online.

Figure 11



### Summary

In the years since the first *Youth Internet Safety Survey* was published, parents and guardians remained concerned about what their children might encounter online, and most were acting on their concerns by talking to their children and taking steps to limit exposure to sexual material. Youth seemed to concur that families were having conversations about Internet safety. Youth also may have been taking action on their own to reduce exposure to unwanted sexual material and other types of unwelcome advertising by using pop-up and spam blockers their parents or guardians may not have known about.

Some parents/guardians and youth, however, may feel they are alone in their efforts to deal with online problems, based on how much was undisclosed and how little was reported to law enforcement, Internet service providers, and other authorities. There still seems to be a tremendous lack of knowledge about what help sources are available when disturbing or offensive things happen online. Many of the incidents youth told us about were mild, but even the most serious events generally were not reported to any authority.

Another concern is the segment of youth Internet users who are doing potentially risky or offensive things online. We found fairly small proportions of youth engaging in online sexual behavior, such as going to X-rated sites on purpose

(13%) and talking online about sex with people they did not know in person (5%). Close to half of those youth were with friends or other youth they knew when they visited X-rated sites (44%) or talked online about sex with people they did not know in person (43%). We need to learn more about the dynamics of these situations.

We also found worrisome increases in the number of youth who admitted to being rude to and harassing others online (14% in YISS-1 versus 28% in YISS-2). Most youth who admitted to rudeness (72%) and harassment (75%) said these behaviors were directed at people the youth knew offline. We did not gather detailed information about these incidents so we do not know who those offline acquaintances were. Forty-four (44) percent of youth were with friends or other youth when they were harassing others.

We also found 34% of youth in YISS-2, as opposed to 11% of youth in YISS-1, posted their real name, telephone number, home address, or school name online where anyone could see them. Revealing personal information online may be happening more often as the Internet is becoming more integrated in the lives of youth. We need more information about the circumstances under which youth are disclosing such information so we are able to better assess the risks and inform youth, parents/guardians, and educators about which disclosures are risky and which are safer.

Table 8. YISS-2 Online Risky Behavior (N=3,001)

<b>Risky Online Behavior in the Past Year</b>	<b>YISS-1 Youth (N=1,501)</b>	<b>YISS-2 Youth (N=1,500)</b>
<b>Posting or Sending Personal Information or Pictures</b>		
<b>Posted Personal Information Online Where Anyone Could See It</b>		
Real Name, Telephone Number, Home Address, or School Name	11%	34%
Age or Date of Birth	–	45%
Picture	5%	18%
None of the Above	–	44%
<b>Sent Personal Information to Someone Met Online*</b>		
Real Name, Telephone Number, Home Address, or School Name	–	11%
Age or Date of Birth	–	23%
Picture	7%	9%
None of the Above	–	39%
<b>Online Sexual Behavior</b>		
<b>Talked Online About Sex With Someone Youth Never Met in Person</b>	<b>4% (n=63)</b>	<b>5% (n=77)</b>
Gender		
Boy	62%	45%
Girl	38%	55%
Age		
10 to 13 Years Old	8%	12%
14 to 17 Years Old	92%	88%
With Friends or Other Kids	–	43%
<b>Went to X-Rated Sites on Purpose</b>	<b>8% (n=123)</b>	<b>13% (n=199)</b>
Gender		
Boy	87%	83%
Girl	13%	17%
Age		
10 to 13 Years Old	13%	13%
14 to 17 Years Old	87%	87%
With Friends or Other Kids	–	44%
<b>Downloaded Sexual Images Through File-Sharing on Purpose</b>	–	2%
<b>Used Screen Name that Was "Sexual in Any Way"</b>	–	1%
<b>Posted or Sent Sexual Picture of Self</b>	–	0.1%
<b>Rudeness and Harassment</b>		
<b>Made Rude or Nasty Comments to Someone Online</b>	<b>14% (n=215)</b>	<b>28% (n=425)</b>
Gender		
Boy	52%	49%
Girl	48%	51%
Age		
10 to 13 Years Old	17%	20%
14 to 17 Years Old	83%	80%
With Friends or Other Kids	–	44%
<b>Used Internet to Harass or Embarrass Someone Youth Was Mad At</b>	<b>1% (n=19)</b>	<b>9% (n=129)</b>
Gender		
Boy	84%	46%
Girl	16%	54%
Age		
10 to 13 Years Old	21%	16%
14 to 17 Years Old	79%	84%
With Friends or Other Kids	–	44%
<b>Other Behaviors</b>		
<b>Downloaded Pictures, Videos, or Movies Through File-Sharing Program</b>	–	15%
<b>Had People on Instant-Messaging "Chat List"</b>		
Youth Did Not Know In Person	–	35%

\* Only asked of youth who said they talked online with people they did not know in person (YISS-1 n=839, YISS-2 n=645). For purposes of comparison, youth who did not talk to unknown individuals online were coded as not having this behavior in the current table.

Note: Table percentages for gender, age, and being with friends or other kids are based on the number of youth who admitted to each behavior.



## Major Findings and Conclusions

1. **The smaller proportion of youth Internet users who received unwanted sexual solicitations since the first *Youth Internet Safety Survey* is heartening news.**

A smaller proportion of youth Internet users received sexual solicitations. In YISS-1, 19% received such solicitations, and in YISS-2, 13% received such solicitations. Plus a smaller proportion of youth Internet users were visiting chatrooms and communicating online with people they did not know in person. These findings suggest youth Internet users may be more aware of the risky nature of online encounters with such people.

2. **The Internet remains a source of disturbing and offensive solicitations for many youth.**

Even though a smaller proportion of youth Internet users received sexual solicitations, the proportion with the most serious incidents, aggressive and distressing solicitations, did not decline.

3. **A disturbing new trend: Solicitors who ask youth for sexual pictures of themselves.**

Four (4) percent of all the youth we spoke with said someone online had asked them for a sexual picture of themselves in the past year. It seems clear increasing bandwidth and the digital-photography revolution mean the transmission of still and moving imagery will continue to be a growing part of Internet activity, which can be turned to illegal sexual purposes. These technological developments have happened quickly. Parents/guardians, youth, educators, youth-service workers, and prevention professionals have not had a long time to think about all the ramifications of these developments. Solicitations for sexual pictures will certainly remain a serious threat to youth. New prevention messages need to be crafted with this development in mind.

4. **Sexual solicitations remain a phenomenon of the teen years. Younger children rarely reported solicitations.**

YISS-2 findings reinforce earlier findings that online sexual solicitations primarily affect teenagers (Wolak, et al., 2004). Ninety (90) percent of youth who experienced unwanted solicitations were ages 13 and older. Preteen youth may be less likely to receive solicitations because they may use the Internet differently than older youth. For example more of them may confine their online communications to people they know well. And normal teenage development may be an important factor. Developmental literature has long noted teenagers are naturally concerned with forming intimate relationships and curious about sexual matters (Lerner & Galambos, 1998; Petersen, 1988; Steinberg & Sheffield, 2001; Thornburgh & Lin, 2002). These aspects of adolescent development may make teenagers more vulnerable than younger youth to online sexual solicitations if they use the Internet to pursue such interests.

5. **The extent of unwanted exposure to sexual material among youth is extraordinarily high and grew between the times YISS-1 and YISS-2 were conducted.**

Approximately one third of youth Internet users (34%) had an unwanted exposure to sexual material in the past year, an increase from 25% in YISS-1 that occurred despite increases in the number of families using filtering, blocking, or monitoring software. This suggests such software, as used by families, is not meeting the challenge. Several reasons for this are possible. It may be that families tend to install such software only **after** incidents of unwanted exposure. Youth may be turning off or removing the software if it interferes with things they want to do online. Also youth may have Internet access in so many places that software on home computers provides only limited protection. Or it may be such software cannot deal with the sheer volume and rapid replenishment of sexual material online. Further much of the new software adoption may consist primarily of pop-up blockers, which may help reduce the problem somewhat but are not tools designed to eliminate unwanted exposure to sexual material.

Both YISS-1 and YISS-2 found more youth were exposed to sexual material they did not want to see than to material they sought on purpose. Unfortunately efforts to protect against unwanted sexual material have not been as successful as hoped. New means to reduce the intrusion of sexual material into areas of the Internet commonly used by youth need to be found.

6. **Close to 1 in 10 youth Internet users had a distressing encounter with unwanted sexual material in the past year.**

Much of the debate about youth and online sexual material discusses the volume of such material and ease with which it can be accessed (Ashcroft v. ACLU, 2004; Thornburgh & Lin, 2002; Ashcroft v. ACLU, 2002). The policy and practical discussion has focused considerably less on the issue of unwanted exposure. The findings of this study suggest involuntary exposure needs to be a much greater focus of attention.

7. **Online harassment grew by 50%.**

There are signs youth are increasingly experiencing, committing, and tolerating hostile and aggressive behavior online. This could have major consequences for the online experiences of youth and future role of the Internet. Norms about standards of behavior in a new domain are much easier to change while they are still being established, rather than after they have become entrenched. It is important to identify and reverse this trend of online harassment before it becomes pervasive.

8. **Some of the unwanted experiences and risky Internet use were not solitary.**

Some of the unwanted incidents happened when youth were together with friends or peers. Similarly some of the bad behavior youth engaged in online happened when youth were together with friends. It should be a priority to find out more about how young people are using the Internet when they socialize in pairs and